

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 1/5/92
Ephesians 6:5-9 "How to Live for Christ on the Job"

Intro: What does God expect of Christians in the workforce? What standard does God have for Christian employers and employees? What difference should there be, if any, between a Christian boss and a non-Christian boss? How should you respond if you have a demanding supervisor?

Tough questions. Yet relevant questions. In fact, I'm convinced that one of the greatest breakdowns in the American church is our failure to see the relevance of God's Word for how we live Monday through Saturday. We go to church on Sunday--that's God's day. Then we call the shots the other six--those are our days. And we don't see any contradiction with this schizophrenic way of living.

What does God expect of Christians in the workforce?

Proposition: In Ephesians 6:5-9, God's Word presents practical principles for how we should function as Christians on the job.

I. The Responsibility of Slaves (5-8)

Slaves are to please the Lord by obeying their Masters.

On the Job Characteristics:

- A. Respect (5)
- B. Loyalty (5)
- C. Proper Motivation (5)
- D. Integrity (6)
- E. Sincerity (6)
- F. Commitment (7)
- G. Confidence (8)

II. The Responsibility of Masters (9)

- A. Do the Same.
- B. Don't abuse authority.
- C. Remember, you have a Master too.

Background for our Study:

Key: Ephesians teaches this--The way Christians live ought to be different!

Why? Two reasons.

1. Because Christians are "in Christ", and have abundant resources for living the Christian life (see 1:1; 1:3)

2. Because Christians have the Holy Spirit.

What practical difference does the Holy Spirit make in your life?

5:18 "Be filled with the Spirit"--What happens when a person is controlled by the Spirit? Three by-products:

- a. Your Praise (19)
- b. Your Perspective (20)--Be thankful!
- c. Your Personal Relationships (21).

Spirit-filled Christians have solid relationships with other people. This is basic. If I am right with God, I'll be right with other people. My vertical relationship and my horizontal relationship go hand in hand.

What relationships should the Spirit affect in our lives?

--Relationships in the Home (Wives, Husbands, Children, Parents)

--Relationships on the Job

Illust:

I. The Responsibility of Slaves (5-8)

V 5 "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters"

Initial observation: Different Economic setting--"Servants/Masters"

What's going on? Does the Bible condemn slavery? No. But neither does it condone it. In fact, everywhere does God's Word uphold the dignity and worth of human life.

But the Bible works with us where we are, living in a fallen, sin-cursed world.

Background: The commentator William Barclay says that when Paul wrote to slaves in the Ephesian church, he must have been writing to a very large number. Slavery then was different than in 19th century America. It's been computed that in the R.E. there were 60 million slaves. One source I read said that 1/3 of the population in large cities such as Ephesus, Rome, Antioch, and Corinth were slaves. Practically all work was done by slaves. Slaves were viewed as part of the Roman household (which explains why Paul includes this in his "household/family" section of Eph). And don't think of first century slaves only as cotton pickers. Slaves served as cooks, cleaners, teachers, physicians, nurses, household managers, janitors, business managers, salesmen, contracting agents. True, some slaves did menial tasks like sewer cleaning and street paving. But it's also true that some slaves served in high level executive positions with decision-making powers.

What made a slave a slave? He was the property of another person.

How did a person become a slave? Various ways. The chief way before the first century was by being captured in war, or by being kidnapped (eg-Joseph). The practice of stealing people and selling them into slavery had been around for centuries.

But the slaves mentioned in the NT most likely became slaves by one of 2 ways. One, they were born in slavery. Children of mothers in slavery became slaves themselves, acc to Roman law. And two, large numbers of people sold themselves into slavery. Why? They couldn't make it financially. They were in debt. They couldn't declare bankruptcy, so the alternative to jail was to sell themselves to a master who would take not only their freedom but also their debts.

Note: Many of us here today, if we had lived in the first century, would have been slaves. Middle Class Americans would be slaves in the first century context. Why? Most of us depend on someone else for \$. On banks. On Credit Card companies. On Employers.

Don't forget this. Acc to the law, a slave was a "thing," a chattel to be owned, bought, and sold. A person in slavery could not contract a legal marriage, represent

himself in court, or inherit. Basically a slave was no better than a beast who happened to be able to talk. He had no rights or privileges.

Q: What counsel did Paul give the slaves? What does God expect slaves to do?

A: "Be obedient" (same word used for children in v 1)

Slaves are to please the Lord by obeying their Masters.

But how? How does God expect slaves to obey their masters? How does God expect you and me to honor our employers? How does God expect us to approach our jobs?

The answer is given in vv 5-8-Seven phrases that modify the verb "be obedient"

Seven on the Job Characteristics (characteristics of an obedient employee):

A. On the Job, a Slave should exhibit Respect (5).

V 5 "with fear and trembling"

What does Paul tell the slaves in Ephesus to do? Run for it? Rebel? Start a coalition of slaves and picket for their rights? No. With all the emphasis today on worker's rights, it's startling to us to see Paul focus on the worker's responsibility.

Here's where it starts on the job--not with a preoccupation with your rights, but your responsibilities. Servants, obey your masters with fear and trembling. Or to paraphrase, employees give your employers RESPECT.

Illust:

There's a second characteristic, related to respect.

V 5 "Be obedient. . . in singleness of your heart"

B. On the Job, a Slave should exhibit Loyalty (5).

"singleness"--lit. "one fold as opposed to two folds" = the opposite of being doubleminded; to have singleness of heart means that there is not one trace of hypocrisy or deceit or cunning in the way you approach your job.

Have you ever worked with someone who used more energy to find ways to get out of doing his job than it would take to actually do it?

Illust: Paint Crew at GRBC--I used to scratch my head when I painted during the summer next to Christians (one a professor) who would rather talk and take breaks than work the 8 hours for which we were being paid. It was easy to rationalize, "I'm underpaid so I'll underwork! 5 bucks an hour for work that's worth a lot more than that!"

What's the problem with that approach? It lacks respect and loyalty for the employer. But there's an even greater flaw in that approach to work. Look at the third characteristic at the end of v 5.

v 5 "Servants be obedient. . . as unto Christ"

C. On the Job, a Slave should exhibit Proper Motivation (5).

What motivates you when you punch the clock on Monday morning?

Listen. Every piece of work that a Christian produces must be good enough to show to Jesus Christ. Right here's the secret of good workmanship. Do it for God.

What do I need to keep in mind when I'm at work? This--God's eye is on me. Do I want to please my boss? Sure. But more importantly, I want to please Christ. And if I work in a way that will please Christ, the rest will take care of itself.

V 5 "Servants be obedient. . . as unto Christ."

Key: There ought to be a difference between Christians and non-Christians on the job.

Problem: Too often there is, and the difference is not good. I've talked with Christian business owners who've said it's a strain to hire Christian employees. Why? Because there are some Christians who want something for nothing, who take advantage of their company.

Q: Do we give our employer and fellow-employees a good picture of Christ by our attitudes and actions on the job?

Illust:

Tran: What characteristics does God want to see in our lives on the job? Respect, Loyalty, Proper Motivation. Number 4. . .

D. On the Job, a Slave should exhibit Integrity (6).

V 6 "Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers, but as servants of Christ"

Do you know what slaves did in the first century? Imagine this. They worked when the Master was watching, and loafed when he wasn't. That doesn't happen today, does it?

And what did Paul tell the servants? "That's OK. It's not fair that you're a slave! You deserve better working conditions. So if you can take advantage of your master when he's not watching, go ahead!" Did Paul say that? No. What did he say?

Be obedient. Exhibit integrity. In two ways.

1. DON'T obey with eyeservice as menpleasers.
2. DO obey as the servants of Christ.

Bosses can't see everything. But that doesn't matter for the Christian. Why not? Because our Lord can. And our aim is to please Him.

Did you catch that? Paul told slaves to do their work as if it were for Christ.

Principle: There's a principle for us. Housewives, how do you view cooking supper? Is it a mundane routine, food thrown on the table, or do you prepare that meal as if Jesus Christ Himself were going to eat it? Nurses, do you serve your patients as if you were serving Christ Himself? Salesmen, do you treat your customers the same way you'd treat the Lord if He were across the table?

That's characteristic #4--Integrity.

Illust:

E. On the Job, a Slave should exhibit Sincerity (6).

V 6 "doing the will of God from the heart"

It's possible to go through the motions in your job, doing enough to just get by. But what does our Lord expect of us? We are to "do the will of God." He gave us our job. Our aim is to please Him. And we are to do it "from the heart."

What do you do when the boss isn't around? If I'm "doing the will of God from the heart," it won't matter whether the boss is there or not.

Sincerity.

Illust:

F. On the Job, a Slave should exhibit Commitment (7).

What is our commitment?

V 7 "With good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men."

Q: What is the greatest commitment a Christian has on the job? To get a Pay raise? No. A Job Promotion. No. A good Evaluation by the Supervisor at the end of the year. No. There's nothing wrong with these. But what is the greatest commitment God expects of a Christian on the job?

A: A Spiritual Commitment--V 7 "With good will doing. . . as to the Lord" Did you notice how many times Paul focused on the Lord as he explained our responsibilities on the job?

v 5 "be obedient. . . as unto Christ"

v 6 "be obedient. . . as the servants of Christ"

v 7 "be obedient. . . doing service as to the Lord and not to men"

v 8 "be obedient. . . he shall receive of the Lord"

Children are to obey their parents. Why? Parents are God's delegated representatives. Citizens are to obey their civil authorities. Why? They are ordained by God (Rom 13). And why are servants to obey their masters? Same reason.

Practical Challenge: I don't know what job you have. You may be an executive or an engineer or a teacher or a carpet layer or a carpenter or waitress in a fast food restaurant or a machinist or a salesperson. But if you're a Christian I do know that Eph 6 challenges us to approach our jobs with a perspective that is foreign to many. It's this. Do your job as if Jesus Christ were beside you every step of the way. Because He is!

Illust:

Tran: God expects us to exhibit the following on the job: Respect, Loyalty, Proper Motivation, Integrity, Sincerity, and Commitment. What happens if we do? We can have one final characteristic. What?

G. On the Job, a Slave should exhibit Confidence (8).

Why can we have confidence? V 8

V 8 "Knowing that whatever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive. . ."

God keeps records. You say, "My company has taken advantage of me. I've put in 20 years, and they've shafted me." God knows. And just think of it--God promises to reward us for doing what's right--"whatever good thing any man does. . ."

There's God's standard--Do the "good" thing on the job. God operates with moral absolutes. We should too. Our standard on the job is to do our best, to do what is good, NOT what we can get away with, NOT what everyone else is doing. Do what's right on the job. The Lord will notice.

Illust:

Tran: There's the responsibility of Slaves. Slaves are to obey. Their obedience is to be characterized by respect, loyalty, proper motivation, integrity, sincerity, commitment, and confidence. But what about the Masters?

II. The Responsibility of Masters (9)

Masters have a responsibility too. Employers and bosses and supervisors and business owners are expected to please God as well.

How? What responsibility does God give Masters (Note: to Christian Masters)?

V 9 presents 3 principles for Employers:

A. Do the Same.

V 9 "And ye masters, do the same to them"

That is, if you hope to receive respect, show it. If you hope to receive service, give it. That's the golden rule. Bosses, don't treat your employees as numbers. Treat them with the same dignity you'd expect.

B. Don't abuse authority.

V 9 "forbearing threatening"

The Romans said it was OK for Masters to inflict punishment on their slaves. Commentator John Stott points out that slaves were sometimes whipped, imprisoned in chains, mutilated, their eyes were gouged out, their teeth were knocked out, they were even thrown to wild beasts or crucified.

Obviously God's Word prohibited that. But notice v 9 is more specific. Masters, forbear threatening. That is, don't misuse your position of authority.

Illust: Have you ever had a supervisor that let his power go to his head?

Christian bosses ought to be different.

What will help them to treat their subordinates appropriately? Principle #3.

C. Remember, you have a Master too.

V 9 "knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons. . ."

Masters remember, you have a Master too!

Illust: "My boss is supposed to be a Christian, but you'd never know it.

God's not impressed with titles. Some day ever human being will stand before Him. That includes CEO's of large corporations, as well as the janitor who cleans the office at night. That includes powerful politicians, and that includes the lowly taxpayer. The foreman and the common laborer. All of us will appear before Him.

And notice the last phrase of v 9--"there is no respect of persons with Him."

Q: If you were to stand before the Lord today, what would He have to say about your life? Have you been living for Christ on the job? Are you pleasing Christ by the way you work?

Challenge: This has been a message for Christians. If you leave here and think you can earn a trip to heaven because you're a good worker, you've missed the point.

"There is NONE righteous, no not one." You need to receive Christ as the Savior and Master (9) of your life today.

But Christian, let me to ask you, "Is Christ really the Master of your life?"

Illust: